

Romance on the River

Orlando L. Tibbetts

Trafford (Jul 6, 2006)

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Few things can intrude upon a tranquil life as abruptly as the prognosis of an incurable disease. The priorities, activities, and focus of a person's life are destined to be immediately transformed. Christians, however, can use their faith to face such challenges with the presence of God's peace and strength. In *Romance on the River*, Orlando L. Tibbetts uses the imagery of a flowing river as the basis for a story that emphasizes God's unfailing love for His children.

After ten years of marriage, Oliver and Jessica Tate learn that she has Lou Gehrig's disease, which is terminal. The couple has always found strength and peace from rivers, and they frequently visit their favorite one to reflect on the spiritual symbolism of rivers. As Jessica's health deteriorates, they leave Massachusetts to spend the final stages of her life in a condominium along the St. John's River in Florida.

Following Jessica's death, Oliver meets Margarita on a riverboat cruise and they begin a romantic relationship. She invites Oliver and his two daughters to Mexico to discover her homeland, but danger interrupts when Oliver and Margarita are kidnapped by local bandits.

Tibbetts, a former pastor and missionary, is an accomplished author of several nonfiction books. Unfortunately, the flaws in this fictional work are numerous. They include the lack of a strong story line and the absence of any subplots. There are no truly suspenseful scenes, and the author's few attempts at dramatic moments are awkward and unrealistic. For example, in chapter two, the Tate family gets caught in a rainstorm and Jessica falls on a brick sidewalk. Blood begins "spurting out of her mouth." When the medics arrive, they clean her up, check her vital signs, and ask her how she feels. She tells them she is fine. Tibbetts wraps up the scene by explaining that, "The ambulance left, the taxi arrived, the rain stopped, the sun came out, and the shaken, but more relaxed family, began its journey back toward the home." Apparently, the spurting blood was just a cut lip. Even the kidnapping lacks tension and excitement.

The dialogue is jerky and poorly crafted. As a result, the characters appear stiff, making it difficult for the reader to connect with them.

Tibbetts' grammatical and punctuation errors are almost overwhelming. Most annoying is his excessive and often inappropriate use of commas, resulting in distracting breaks in sentence flow. Tibbetts also places an abundance of ellipses in his dialogue to try to control the pacing.

Romance on the River is at its best when the author focuses on scriptural analogies of the river. Tibbetts' Christian perspectives are warm and inspirational, but they may have had more impact as a 500-word devotional or magazine article.

JEFF FRIEND (May 24, 2012)

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